श्री सभापति : डॉ. टी. सुब्बारामी रेड्डी।

श्री बालकवि बैरागी : सर, इनके आज भी दो क्वैश्चंस हैं।

डॉ. टी. सुब्बारामी रेड्डी : सर, दो नहीं तीन क्वैश्चंस हैं ...*(व्यवधान)*...

I would like to put a very small question. The Minister has said that it is not possible to complete Allahabad Bypass Road by 2004. I would like to know when we will be able to complete it. Secondly, though we have solved the very tough strike of trucks, what is the impact of this strike on the road projects?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : As far as Allahabad Bypass is concerned, I have said that we are still to award the contract and we are trying to expedite it. Three contracts will be given, two for the approaches and one for the bridge. We are trying to expedite but the World Bank terms are such that minimum period of construction is to be given and we have to follow that instruction. Once the contract is given, then only we will be able to specify the exact date.

SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN : Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister in how many cases—you have said that one of the incentives given is bonus, and penalties are also levied—you have levied penalty and in how many cases you have given bonus in this completed road of 1327 kilometres.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : Sir, I do not have the exact figures or the numbers, but we have given bonuses. In the case of penalties, at the moment, because of various procedures, we have terminated the contract in one case. Otherwise, so far, the penalty has not been imposed because it is only done after completion. Because of various reasons, we do not give them extension, but bonus has been given in a number of cases. I will supply the exact number to the hon. Member.

Speed Post facility in Rajasthan

*484. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMAD KHAN (DURRU) : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Speed Post facility has been provided in the backward areas of Rajasthan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the measures contemplated to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) Speed Post is a premium product and is run on commercial considerations. Expansion of this network is an on-going process. Extending the service to a particular place would depend on market requirements, customer needs, expected business and connectivity required for maintaining service standards.

The 1991 Census does not list any particular area as backward in the State. However, a Working Group of the Planning Commission (in 1994) identified 16 districts as backward from the point of view of industrial backwardness. These districts are: Barmer, Churu, Sirohi, Jaisalmer, Alwar, Jodhpur, Bhilwara, Nagaur, Udaipur, Jhalawar, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Tonk, Dungarpur, Banswara, Jalore.

12 districts were identified as backward by the Government of India for purposes of Income Tax benefits in 1997. These districts are : Barmer, Jalore, Jaisalmer, Churu, Banswara, Dungarpur, Dholpur, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Nagaur, Jhalawar, Sikar.

All the above mentioned districts have been provided with Speed Post facility.

SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMAD KHAN (DURRU) : Sir, as the speed post facility has been extended to all the 12 backward districts identified by the Government of India, will the Government conduct the survey to ascertain how well these services are working and does the Department keep track of complaints in Rajasthan? Can the hon. Minister give the figures for Rajasthan as well as the country pertaining to the delay or non-delivery of speed post? And, how many complaints, on an average, are coming annually?

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Sir, the hon. Member has rightly said that speed post facilities are available in all the backward districts in Rajasthan. Sir, the Government does make two checks in the delivery of speed post.

One is that there are checks every month on transit points to see as to whether the actual transiting from particular points is in accordance with the norms; and secondly, checks are made on the points of delivery. The third check is on rectification of complaints. In regard to Rajasthan—I am going only by the figures, if the hon. Member has any other specific case in mind, I will attend to it—in the transit cases, the efficiency which has been reported in the monthly survey is 99.12% and the same figure has come up in delivery of speed post at the point of delivery. At the point of delivery, one can find out, because it is a bar coded item. When the item is delivered, it is then put on the website. There are two websites from which a person who has sent the material can verify whether it has reached that point or not. Second question is with regard to complaints. In this year, ending March 31, 2003, 2319 complaints were received and 2252 complaints have been settled. This, as a proportion of total traffic of speed post handled in Rajasthan, is 0.19 per cent.

SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMAD KHAN (DURRU) : Sir, in addition to sending letters swiftly, common man needs to ensure that the money orders, which he sends, reach swiftly as well. I would like to know what has happened to the Government's plan to enable customers to transfer money orders electronically through post offices.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Sir, that is an unfortunate report and I will give it to you. Actually, this scheme was evolved in 1989 and in 1996, 77 VSATs were purchased for sending money orders electronically. They were contracted to private company, for their software solution. Unfortunately, there was great delay in supplying the software and when the software was supplied, it did not work. It started in June last year. By November four lakh money orders were reported to have gone into the software but not delivered. Therefore, in November, the service was suspended. Now, the software is being redone in the Postal Training Centre at Mysore, and I have requested the National Informatic Centre to collaborate with this so that we can restart the service very soon.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Prof. Saif-ud-din Soz. You will not go out of Rajasthan.

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want to know about the extension of this service to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. I have great expectation from this Minister. But he is very slow, in spite of the Prime Minister's visit to Jammu and Kashmir very recently. Take, for

instance, the mobile service. It was assured that the mobile service would be extended to Jammu and Kashmir by the end of March. Now, we are in April. What about this service? The State of Jammu and Kashmir should not be ignored.

SHRI ARUN SHOURIE : Sir, there is absolutely no question of ignoring such an important State like Jammu and Kashmir. Every part of the country is important. We will certainly make every effort in this regard. On this issue of mobile, if there is a separate question, I will certainly attend to it.

Passports issued from Delhi and Lucknow

*485. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI :†
SHRI AMAR SINGH :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of applications for passports received in Delhi and Lucknow during the last one year indicating the number of passports issued so far;

(b) the number of applications which are pending for more than 4 weeks alongwith the reasons for delay in their disposal; and

(c) what steps have been taken for early disposal of these applications?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA) : (a) to (c) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

(a) The number of passport applications received and number of passports issued against these applications after receipt of police verification reports by Passport Offices in Delhi and Lucknow during the last financial year are as under :

Passport Office	Number of passport applications Received	Number of Police Verification Reports received	Number of Passports issued
Delhi	1,58,226	1,44,552*	1,33,119
Lucknow	1,13,940	70,072	61,437

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Abu Asim Azmi.